



**A few words  
from State  
Superintendent  
of Schools  
Lillian M.  
Lowery**

Let's give another round of applause to Maryland educators who have been involved in this summer's Educator Effectiveness Academies. I visited the Academy in Baltimore City recently, and found scores of teachers and principals hard at work on their implementation plans for the Common Core State Standards. Reports from all of the Academies have been outstanding.

This summer's final two Academies are underway this week in Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties. But the work doesn't end there. This is an important transition for our schools and our students, and we appreciate the work of everyone involved.

\* \* \*

A new report from Education Trust finds that Maryland is well-positioned for the rigors of the Common Core. Maryland students have improved at a rapid rate on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams. Moreover, both low-income and African American students have shown progress over the past decade.

"Uneven at the Start: Differences in Track Records Foreshadow Challenges and Opportunities for the Common Core," issued this month, attempted to pinpoint the special challenges states may have with the more rigorous standards. Education Trust cited Maryland and a handful of other states that have a record of high performance and strong improvement with all groups of learners.

Nobody involved in Maryland education is complacent. We began our move to the Common Core three years ago, and we know the increase in rigor has many challenges. But we also know that these changes are being made for the right reasons: to prepare our graduates for college or career.

## **MSA SCORES DIP SLIGHTLY AS MARYLAND PREPARES FOR NEW ASSESSMENTS**

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores took a slight step back in 2013, as State classrooms moved forward with new learning standards, according to data released this month by the Maryland State Department of Education.



Assistant State Superintendent Henry Johnson discusses the 2013 MSA results with the State Board.

The percentage of elementary students scoring at the proficient levels in reading fell slightly from 88.2 percent in 2012 to 86.4 percent this year, while the percentage of elementary students scoring in the proficient levels in mathematics dropped from 87.7 to 83.9 percent. The percentage of middle

school students scoring at proficient levels in reading improved from 82.1 percent in 2012 to 83.4 percent this year, while mathematics scores in the proficient range fell from 76.2 to 72.2 percent.

The results speak directly to the important changes that have been taking place in Maryland public school classrooms, and those across the country. Similar testing results have been recorded in other states this year.

"We are in a transition period, both in Maryland and throughout the nation," said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. "Maryland schools have been implementing the Common Core State Standards in reading and mathematics, but new assessments aligned to the curriculum will not be ready for use until the 2014-15 school year. This misalignment will certainly affect our scores this year and next."

More on the new report is available [here](#).

\* \* \*

As noted, we want Maryland graduates to be better prepared for college and career, but it is wonderful to note that many of our schools already are preparing many students for the world of work through some outstanding educational programs.

Last month, Maryland's SkillsUSA delegation brought home 24 medals at the National Leadership and Skills Conference, including four gold medals. Top awards by Career and Technology Education (CTE) students came in medical assisting, nurse assisting, principles of engineering technology, and t-shirt design.

This month, more honors for Maryland CTE students through the annual Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda competition. Maryland students received honors in three competitions, including a second place in hospitality management.

For more information on the Skills USA competition, click [here](#).

For more on the FBLA-Phil Beta Lambda competition, click [here](#).

\* \* \*

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Jack Smith and Cindy Hasselbring to MSDE's staff. Both begin work next week. As many of you know, Jack recently stepped down as Superintendent of the Calvert County school system. He has been a teacher, principal, and administrator in his career, both in the U.S. and Japan. He joins our staff as Chief Academic Officer. Cindy comes to MSDE from the National Science Foundation in Arlington, VA, where she has spent the past two years as an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Senior Fellow. Prior to that, she spent more than 15 years as a mathematics teacher in Michigan. She joins MSDE as our Digital/STEM Learning Officer.

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Governor Martin O'Malley noted that Maryland schools have had a long history of improvement since the MSAs were introduced a decade ago.

"Thanks to the better choices we've made together to build on the success of Maryland's number one public schools, even as we move our academic standards forward, students have made tremendous strides in achievement," Governor O'Malley said. "Maryland elementary school students have raised their MSA scores nearly 40 percent in both reading and math. Maryland's middle school students nearly doubled their MSA scores in math. In 2003, just 39 percent of our middle school students scored proficient in math; today, more than 72 percent score proficient. Our new curriculum asks teachers and students to dig deeper into core skills and concepts.

"A drop in scores does not represent a drop in student achievement. We will continue to support our students and educators during the next few years as we make a transition that better prepares them to compete globally," the Governor added.

Maryland teachers and principals began implementing the Common Core State Standards to a large degree last school year, and the transition will be complete in the 2013-14 school year. In addition, schools this coming year will be field testing the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments that are aligned to the Common Core. The new tests, under development by Maryland and 21 other states for the past four years, measure the critical content and skills embedded in the new standards.

The PARCC assessments are being built to measure a full continuum of student abilities, including the performance of high- and low-performing students. The assessments will test writing skills at every grade level, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills in an in-depth manner. In addition, the PARCC exams are computer-based, which will allow for timely snapshots of student knowledge that provide parents and students with richer information about performance, and give educators the opportunity to adjust instruction to better support learning.

Plans are for the new exams to be field-tested in every Maryland school in 2013-14, although only in certain grades. Other students will take the MSA one more time. Federal law requires that all students in grades 3-8 be tested each year in reading and



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## Calendar

August 14-17 – Maryland Association of Counties  
Annual Summer Conference, Ocean City

August 19 – Maryland schools begin opening for the  
fall (Frederick and Prince George's opening day)

August 26 – All Maryland schools are open

August 27 – Maryland State Board of Education  
Meeting, Baltimore



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### Judy Center Award - Kent County

July 2, 2013

The Judy Center at H.H. Garnett ES wins the award  
for Most Improved Partnership. The program grows  
from nine to 17 partners under the leadership of  
Coordinator Donna Bedell.



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### Judy Center Award - Baltimore City

July 2, 2013

The Judy Center at The Historic Samuel Coleridge-  
Taylor ES wins the award for Innovative Spirit.  
Coordinator Cathy Frazier and others talk about the  
Backpack program.

## In the News

Maryland Superintendent Looks to Tackle Reforms  
*Baltimore Sun*

Teachers Hit the Books to Learn About New  
Standards  
National Public Radio

Test Scores Dip as Maryland Prepares for the  
Common Core  
*Washington Post*

MSA Scores No Cause for Alarm  
*Baltimore Sun*

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mathematics, but Maryland intends to make certain  
that no student takes both assessments. Once the  
new assessments are ready for full implementation in  
2014-15, initial scores are expected to be lower than  
those on the MSA. The Common Core State  
Standards increase student rigor, which will make  
attaining a proficient score more difficult.

Scheduled for release in the coming months are the  
2013 MSA science scores at the elementary and  
middle school levels, High School Assessment scores,  
graduation rates, and attendance figures. Also  
coming are the School Progress Index (SPI) results,  
Maryland's school accountability plan.

Statewide, system, and local school MSA data is  
available on the Maryland State Department of  
Education's updated report card website,  
[www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org).

## DR. CHARLENE DUKES RE-ELECTED STATE BOARD PRESIDENT; DR. MARY KAY FINAN AS VICE PRESIDENT

The Maryland State Board of Education this month  
unanimously re-elected Dr. Charlene Dukes as its  
president, while Dr. Mary Kay Finan was re-elected  
vice president, also unanimously.



Dr. Charlene  
Dukes

Dr. Dukes has served as State Board  
President for the past year, having  
earlier served three years as vice  
president. She is president of Prince  
George's Community College and has  
had 30 years of progressive  
leadership experience and  
administrative responsibility in  
higher education. She has represented the State  
Board on the Governor's P-20 Council, and  
previously served on the Task Force to Study *How to  
Improve Financial Literacy*. From 2002-2006, she  
served on the Prince George's County Appointed  
Board of Education, and chaired the Student  
Support, Student Appeals, and Personnel  
Committees. Dr. Dukes holds membership in a  
variety of professional organizations, including the  
American Association of Community Colleges, the  
Association of American Colleges and Universities,  
the American Council on Education, the Presidents'  
Round Table, and the National Council on Black  
American Affairs. Locally, Dr. Dukes is a member of  
the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce,

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the Greater Prince George's County Business Roundtable, the Workforce Services Corporation, and the Harlem Renaissance Foundation. Dr. Dukes has a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and a master's and doctorate in Administrative and Policy Studies from the University of Pittsburgh.



**Dr. Mary Kay Finan**

Dr. Finan is a Professor Emeritus of Frostburg State University where she was on the Education faculty from 1991 - 2010. She was the Coordinator of the Elementary and Early Childhood programs and taught the Elementary Science Curriculum, Methods, and Assessment course and the Leadership Seminar. Dr. Finan taught elementary school for 13 years in Allegany County before joining the faculty at Frostburg. She received her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education from Loyola College, a master's degree in Reading from Frostburg State University, and earned a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland.

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MSDE Videos: <http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/videos>

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